**GENERAL APPRAISAL GUIDELINES**

September 30, 2012 Ending Appraisal Cycle

Northern Plains Area

**INTRODUCTION**

This document provides guidelines and deadlines to be used for finalizing performance appraisals and performance awards for the cycle ending September 30, 2012. It also provides preliminary guidelines for establishing the FY 2013 performance plans. Please read the appraisal procedures carefully and ensure that these guidelines are followed when completing all appraisal documents.

**FORMS**

The following forms are available at <https://reeforms.ars.usda.gov/reeforms/>.

* AD-435P, Performance Appraisal
* AD-287-2, Awards

**APPRAISALS**

1. This year, all Category 1 and Category 4 Scientists’ appraisals must be submitted through Lynda Jensen (WBSC HR Assistant) to the Area Director for review prior to discussion with the employee. This includes all SYs at the Centers.
2. Supervisors are encouraged to seek appropriate customer feedback for employees who provide customer support to a Unit or Location, such as a Secretary, Program Support Assistant, Administrative Officer (AO), Location Support Staff, and Area Staff.

1. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is requiring agencies to track employees’ performance appraisals. The Performance Appraisal Period ending 9/30/12 Employee Lists will be distributed to you in a separate email as soon as we receive them from Human Resources Division (HRD). You will use these lists to complete employee information on the AD-435P as well as to track the status and completion of performance appraisals with dates annotating when the rating is completed (performance rating discussions held and appraisal AD-435P signed by Reviewer, Supervisor and Employee).
2. The annotated Performance Appraisal Period Ending 9/30/2012 Employee Lists must be attached to the top of your completed location appraisal packages. An explanation must be added on the Employee Listing for employees not being rated; also add any missing employee names that are being rated.

Reminder: There are two versions of the Employee Listings used for the performance appraisal cycle tracking.

1) The listing titled “*Performance Appraisal Period Ending 9/30/12”* is used to track, complete performance appraisal form AD-435P and should be included with the finalized performance packages.

2) The listing titled “*Accountability-Performance Plan Establishment”* is used to set employee performance plans in place with a set date annotated and IDP checked as set in place.

1. All performance ratings are to be discussed, reviewed, and signed first by the Rater and Reviewer before the rating is discussed with employee and employee’s signature applied.
2. An employee’s signature on the AD-435P only constitutes receipt of the appraisal. An employee’s signature does not mean the employee agrees with the rating given. If an employee chooses not to sign their AD-435P, a note should be written in the employee signature box stating, “*Performance review was held on (date) and the employee refused to sign*.”
3. If an employee receives less than a “Fully Successful” rating, the supervisor should already be in contact Employee Relations (with concurrence from the Area Director’s office after the proposed rating has been discussed) as soon as that is determined. Written justification is required for any element that is rated “Does Not Meet Fully Successful.”
4. Employees who have retired or separated and had a performance plan in place for at least 90 days in the rating cycle should be appraised and receive a performance award if warranted. Employees should submit an accomplishment report before their departure.
5. The dates in Block 7 of the AD-435P should reflect the full duration of this performance cycle: 10/1/2011 - 9/30/2012. Performance plans put into place after the deadline dates may not be considered to have been in place for the full year and Block 7 of the AD-435P may be changed to reflect the dates of the performance plan.
6. A written narrative detailing the employee’s accomplishments (2-page summary of accomplishments and supervisor’s annotation/justification) is required to be attached to the AD-435P. Scientists must also include a Detail by Author report run from ARIS.

Reminder:The Detail by Author reports should be run from ARIS using the range of dates 10/01/2011:09/30/2012 in the dates “*Submitted to Journal”* field. Enclosed are instructions for generating the ARIS Detail by Author reports. If you have questions, contact Reagan Heese, NPA Program Analyst, for clarification on the ARIS process.

1. Outstanding ratings and QSI’s must have a separate justification by the supervisor. The employee’s written accomplishments are no longer being accepted by HRD as justification for outstanding ratings.

**AWARDS**

1. The Department’s and NPA Awards Policy must be used for any awards recommended this performance cycle, **except where an approved Union negotiated policy is in place**.
2. A written justification describing the employee’s accomplishments and contributions to support a performance based award must accompany all Cash, Time Off, Outstanding, or QSI Awards. The employee’s written accomplishments are no longer being accepted by HRD as justification for outstanding ratings.
3. A Time Off award can be recommended for an employee in lieu of a cash award. The pay should be calculated for Time Off award hours and should not exceed the dollar amount for performance cash awards. As a guideline, AFM recommends 40 hours for Outstanding and 24 hours for Superior ratings.
4. The AD-287-2 award form must contain the same dates as are on the performance plan AD-435A (Block 7 of the award form).
5. A citation must be provided in Block 11 of AD-287-2. The following is suggested*: “This award is based upon an official performance appraisal rating of (Superior or Outstanding) for the rating period October 1, 2011 through September 30, 2012.”*
6. Remember, only the ***Original*** of AD-287-2 award form is needed with the performance packages.
7. All **performance** ***based awar*d**s including time off awards must be approved by the Area Director*.*
8. Award Spending Limitations: Each location cannot exceed their total location award amount they gave in FY10. This means that we cannot exceed the 2010 dollar amount for the **entire** FY13, to include:
   * + Performance Awards
     + Spot Awards
     + Extra Effort Awards
     + QSIs (dollar amount is the difference in pay between the two steps)